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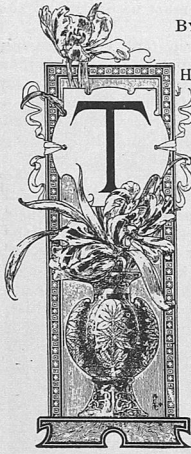
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JAPANESE INTERIORS.—III.

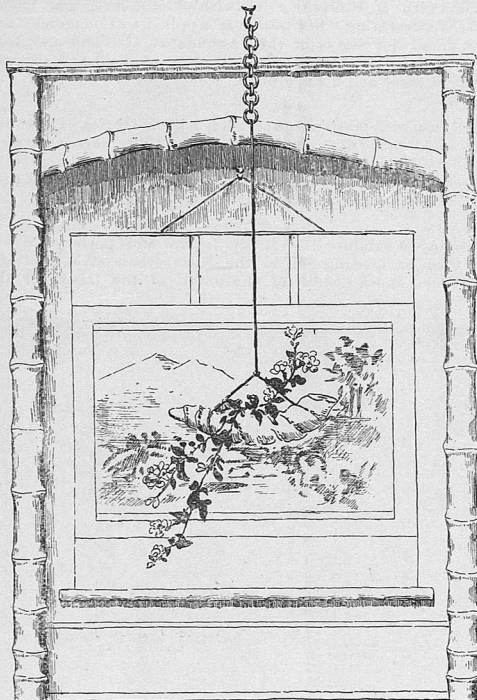
BY LAURA B. STARR.



THE most important thing in the most important room in a Japanese house is the tokonomo. This occupies the right hand half of the side wall, while its companion recess, the chigai-dana, is on the left. The tokonomo is built at right angles with the veranda, which is sure to run along one side of the house, if it is not on three. It has a floor raised several inches above the floor of the room, and is highly polished or lacquered, according to the wealth and social standing of the owner.

In olden times this was called the "bed space," as it was here the Japanese bed, a thickly wadded comfort, called futon, was laid; in front of this is considered the place of honor, either for a guest or the head of the house. In the tokonomo is laid a handsome, finely woven mat, the edges of which are bound with white, while the mats

that cover the floor are always bound with strips of dark blue cotton.



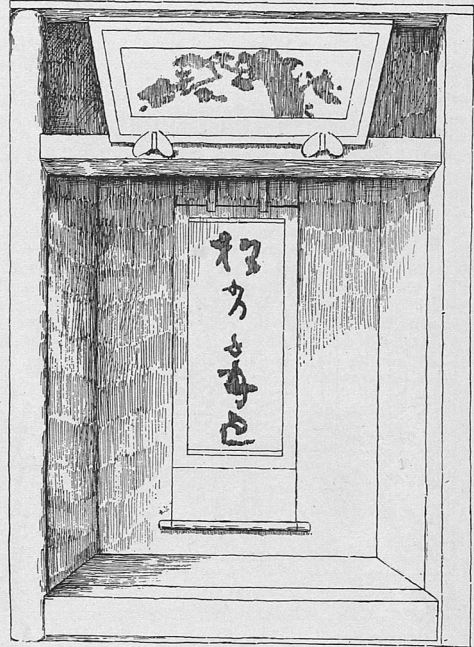
TOKONOMO IN SITTING-ROOM OF A JAPANESE HOUSE.

Between the tokonomo and the chigai-dana there is an ornamental pillar in front and a thin plastered partition. In this partition there is frequently a window opening filled with design of bamboo or cherry wood, then again the wall is unbroken.

In the tokonomo, from time to time, are displayed all the movable decorations in the house, which makes it the central point of interest. If your Japanese host owns a beautiful piece of bronze, or fine kakemonos (hanging pictures) it is here he

will place them for your inspection; but, mind you, only one at a time. His choicest art treasures, pictures, bronzes, old china, etc., are kept in a godown, a fire proof building adjoining his house. From time to time he brings them out, and when wearied of one, or it may be, when the season for its exhibition is over, for these people have seasons for doing everything, he will return it to the godown and bring forth another one.

If the house belongs to one of the wealthier class, the tokonomo will be of quite grand proportions, and may be large



TOKONOMO IN LIBRARY.

enough to display three pictures at a time; on the floor in front of these will be a bronze set consisting of two vases for flowers and an incense burner. The flowers in the vases will be the flowers in season, dedicated to that month; and will in some almost intangible way carry out the idea of the paintings.

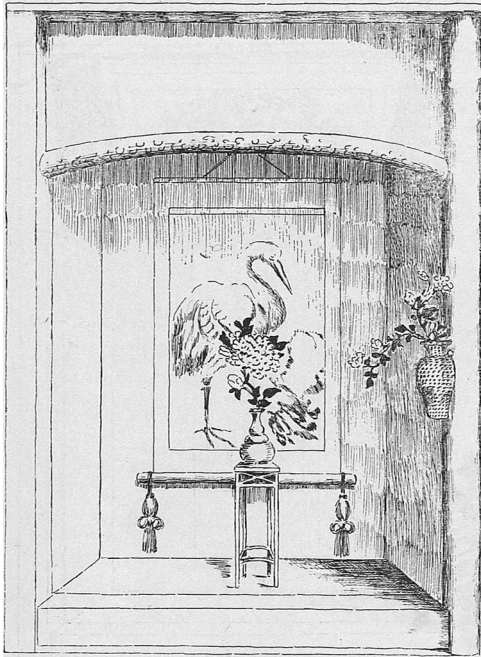
For instance, if the kakemono be a marine view, the flowers will be some sort of aquatic plants, hung in a shell; if the wall picture represents flowering plants, branches of trees will be used in the floral composition, and vice versa. Some of the choicest kakemonos are Chinese manuscript, copy of a poem, or classical quotation; in case these are used the flowers will be arranged in a very simple and modest style; if there be a poem on the wall decoration, such flowers as serve to illustrate the verses may be used.

Condor tells us that the connection of idea between the wall painting and the floral composition, is occasionally one based upon the reputation of the painter, or upon some fiction with which his name is associated. A famous Chinese painter called To-emmei, whose works are greatly valued in this country, is said to have professed a great passion for chrysanthemums; hence, when a painting by this artist is displayed, it is customary to use chrysanthemums in the floral arrangement. Plum blossoms are reported to have been the special fancy of another great painter, Rin-nasei, and these flowers are always placed before his pictures.

One of the great points of difference between the mural decoration of the Japanese and our own is that here in the East one is never called upon to admire anything out of season, while we have all seasons for our own. Here we never find a pictorial representation of snow and ice, shown in summer time;

neither do we see fruits and summer flowers in the winter months; their decorations are always in tune with the present, and convey a sentiment in harmony with the special season and occasion.

Spanning the tokonomo above is a finished beam, a foot or more below the ceiling, the interspace above being plastered, as are the walls. A similar beam spans the chigai-dana at a somewhat lower level. The companion recess is always fitted up



TOKONOMO IN LADIES' BOUDOIR.

with shelves; arranged alternately, chigai meaning "different" and dana "shelves." These shelves are never placed opposite, nor even in a regularly irregular manner; there is an infinite variety of forms and peculiarities; no two can hardly be found alike; symmetrical arrangement is always avoided however. Sometimes the lower half of the chigai-dana is fitted up as a cupboard with small sliding screen door. Above this are placed the shelves, which are triangular, square, long and narrow, or arranged to look like waves of water or mist. The quaintest ones I have seen were in a garden house in the Mikado's palace grounds in Kyoto; they are beautifully polished and kept, although the place is never used these days.

The post which forms one side of the tokonomo is often but a rough and irregular stick, twisted and knarled, with the bark on, such irregularities not being looked upon as a hindrance in the construction of a building. The builder likes them and brings them into use as if he had made a design for just such a shaped piece. The plaster may be a rich warm umber or gray flecked with gold.

The doors of the cupboard are covered sometimes with gold paper, upon which are painted in black, bamboo designs or storks, or any simple drawing. The same decorations are used on the unpainted wood. The shelves in the chigai-dana may be used for smaller floral compositions than the tokonomo, but quite as much care is taken in arranging them.

Upon these shelves, in Yadoyas, one is apt to find ink-poin paper, writings, books and other things of this kind. In private houses the most esteemed book is placed upon one of these shelves, as too sacred a thing to be laid on the ground. When the chigai-dana is at the right of the tokonomo, then be sure the room is of secondary importance.

There are many superstitions about building a house; it is considered lucky to place the door to the south-east and the cupboards on the south-west; the kura must be on the north-east side.

Another one is to put three small open fans, each bearing the red ball, which is the Japanese national emblem, together to form a circle; this is placed in the center of the roof, on the inside, before the ceiling is put in; each fan is dedicated to a special kami or god, and the three, with their long colored hempen streamers, are supposed to bring good luck to the house.

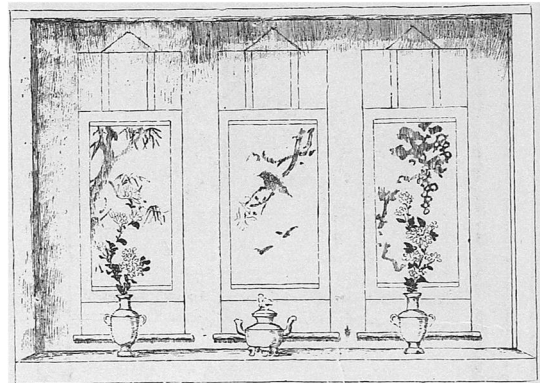
In an old book written in the sixteenth century I find the following statement with regard to wall covering: "The walls within are wainscoted and hung with painted and variously colored paper;" so it would seem that Europe had derived the idea of paper hangings as a substitute for tapestry from Japan. Another old writer speaks of the ceiling and walls being "covered with a handsome thick paper, ornamented with various flowers. These hangings are either green, yellow or white, sometimes embellished with silver and gold. As the paper is greatly damaged by the smoke in winter it is renewed every third or fifth year."

### DECORATIVE NOTES.

THE paintings in the domes of the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building at the Columbian Exposition were masterpieces of decorative art. The north entrance was decorated by Beckwith & Shirlaw. Beckwith's topic was four female figures, representing "Electricity as Applied to Commerce," and Shirlaw had for his topic the "Abundance of Land and Sea," represented by four figures on nuggets of gold and silver, a branch of coral and a huge pearl.

THE bronzes, marbles, tapestries, silken fabrics, glassware, inlaid woodwork and painting of Italy were extremely beautiful. Norway exhibited silverware, marble, granite, wood carvings, hand woven rugs and embroideries, in addition to articles of a more purely commercial character.

ENGLAND exhibited her textile fabrics and pottery, an historic banqueting hall in the Elizabethan style, pottery, china, and a display of the union of the labors of the



TOKONOMO IN DRAWING-ROOM.

sculptor, potter and painter in the Shakespeare centerpiece of porcelain, representing History, Poetry, Tragedy and Comedy, with panels painted with Shakespeare's heroines.

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CHOICE of three routes to St. Louis by the New York Central; four trains daily.